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RICK LARSEN
2ND DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4702
May 11, 2005

COMMITTEES:
TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

AGRICULTURE

ARMED SERVICES

The Honorable Don Young
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James L. Oberstar
Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thomas E. Petri
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Highways,
Transit and Pipelines
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
B-370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Highways,
Transit and Pipelines
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
B-375 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Young and Petri and Ranking Members Oberstar and DeFazio:

On behalf of the Washington State Delegation, we would like to thank you for your leadership in creating the Projects of National and Regional Significance account within H.R. 3, the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (TEALU). In addition, we would like to voice our support for including the Alaskan Way Viaduct in Seattle, WA as a Project of National and Regional Significance.

As you know, traffic congestion and gridlock are the leading causes for increased travel delays, vehicular accidents and rising transportation costs. It is imperative that we alleviate the points of congestion throughout the country to ensure that our goods and services are able to move freely and quickly. Projects of National and Regional Significance funding will be key in partnering with local, regional, state and other federal funds to help Washington state replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct before it collapses and sends the region into gridlock.

The Alaskan Way Viaduct is vital to the economy of the Pacific Northwest and nation. As the gateway to Asia, Western Canada, and the state of Alaska, the nation depends on goods that need to easily pass through the Seattle region. There are two highways that act as transportation thoroughfares through the city of Seattle: Interstate-Five (I-5) and State Route 99 (SR99). SR 99 passes through downtown Seattle on the Alaskan Way Viaduct. Together, both highways are keystones in a freight transportation system that sees over \$80 billion in goods pass through the Seattle region annually to areas outside Washington, much of it going to California, the Chicago area, and cities all across the East Coast. We are pleased that Governor Frank Murkowski of

Alaska also recognizes the regional importance of this project and has expressed his support for it.

The Viaduct carries 103,000 vehicles per day through downtown Seattle. One thousand businesses lie within one mile of the Viaduct. And each year, the Port of Seattle moves \$100 billion in international cargo and the region generates \$30 billion in trade.


The Alaskan Way Viaduct was damaged in a February 2001 earthquake. Engineering studies show it has moved three times in the ensuing four years. The seawall that supports the viaduct structure was also damaged in the earthquake and has suffered further deterioration since then. As the Viaduct and seawall continue to deteriorate, vehicle traffic will be increasingly forced to use I-5 as the only viable means to transport goods through Seattle.

The closure of the Viaduct would bring traffic speeds on I-5 down to 20-25 miles per hour (mph) during off peak hours and 10-15 mph during peak hours. This would add 15,400 hours of delay during peak hours for freight and vehicle traffic. The cost of this congestion is conservatively estimated at 10.4 million person-hours of delay and \$190 million per year. Over time these congestion costs will become even more substantial, affecting our region's mobility and economic vitality as well as that of the nation.

The United States cannot afford to have I-5 become more congested, especially when freight needs to move through such a critical area for international trade. The Alaskan Way Viaduct is a strategic bottleneck where commerce and communities converge and as such we urge that you include it as one of the Projects of National and Regional Significance in TEALU (HR 3).

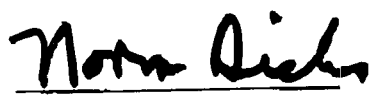
Thank you for your leadership on this effort and for taking this request into consideration.


Sincerely,



Rick Larsen
U.S. Representative



D. Reichert
U.S. Representative

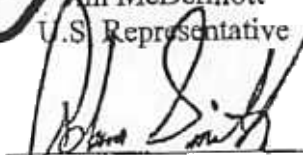

Brian Baird
U.S. Representative



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Jim McDermott
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Doc Hastings
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Adam Smith
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Cathy McMorris
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